



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Veterans' Affairs Committee
February 27, 2018**

- **HB-5231 - AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A FREEZE ON PROPERTY TAXES FOR QUALIFIED DISABLED VETERANS.**
- **HB-5239 - AN ACT CONCERNING ELIGIBILITY FOR CERTAIN VETERANS' PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS.**
- **HB-5240 - AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN VETERANS' PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS.**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) opposes the above-reference bills which expand various mandated property tax exemptions.

Although the bills are certainly well-intended, given the ongoing fiscal challenges facing municipalities, the state must refrain from adopting or expanding any additional mandated property tax exemptions, including municipal option tax exemptions, which undermine the ability of towns to fund the delivery of critical programs and services.

Property taxpayers already shoulder a significant burden for funding education, public safety, transportation and other local services. Mandating property tax exemptions unfairly shifts more of the burden for funding local services onto the backs of other homeowners and businesses that are not eligible for the exemptions.

Rather than adopt or expand any new mandated property tax exemptions, COST urges lawmakers to explore opportunities to reduce unfunded mandates and provide towns with the tools to control local budget expenditures in ways that will reduce the property tax burden on *all* residents and businesses.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.